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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 001205

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SUBJECT: FOUR HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL ARRESTS IN SENEGAL

REF: DAKAR 00837

Classified By: DCM Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

#### SUMMARY

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11. (U) In the past two months, there have been a series of high profile arrests of political figures. Labor leader Ibrahima Sene (Reftel), Amath Dansokho, Secretary General of the Labor Party (PIT), Jean Paul Dias, head of the center right party BCG, and Pape Diouf, Mayor of the City of Bambey, have all been arrested under differing charges and circumstances engendering much controversy. END SUMMARY.

#### SENE AND DANSOKHO: DISSEMINATION OF FALSE INFORMATION

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12. (U) As reported previously (Reftel), leading figures of PIT have been under fire for some time. On March 22, Ibrahima Sene, a member of the PIT's Central Committee, was arrested and charged with dissemination of false information related to a press conference in which he claimed 440 billion CFA francs (CFAF) (USD 800 million) had been removed from Senegal. He was released and charges dropped for lack of evidence, but the impact of the press conference did not stop there. On March 24, Amath Dansokho was given orders to appear at the Division of Criminal Investigations (DIC) to answer questions about the same press conference. He went for six hours of questions on April 6, when a crowd of supporters gathered outside the DIC. The next day, investigators went to his house to ask him to return for questioning, but he refused. Hearing that Dansokho was asked to return to the DIC, opposition party leaders went to his house to form a human shield. Jean Paul Dias was there and gathered rocks to throw at any investigators who tried to take Dansokho. He joined the coalition of opposition parties (the CPA) while this was taking place and also made a public statement that, henceforth, no political party convened to the DIC would agree to go. Ex-Prime Minister Idrissa Seck paid a visit to praise Dansokho's patriotism and sacrifice.

13. (C) Although the DIC dropped its demand that he return for questioning, Dansokho was charged with dissemination of false information, and his trial has been scheduled for May 19. Sene stressed to us that Wade had targeted Dansokho as part of a strategy of intimidating opposition militants. The view of those within Wade's governing coalition, though, is more nuanced. Bassirou Sarr, who is close to And Jef leader and Minister of State Landing Savane, says the arrests were uncoordinated and haphazard, with Senior Minister of Justice Cheikh Tidjiane Sy and Interior Minister Ousmane NGom competing to please Wade through judicial police arrests of Wade critics.

#### JEAN PAUL DIAS ARRESTED LEAVING CHURCH

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14. (C) On April 14, Jean Paul Dias was arrested leaving

Dakar's Cathedral, where he was celebrating the Catholic holy day of Good Friday. His arrest was portrayed by the media as scandalous, given that elements of the DIC had been surveilling him in the Cathedral ahead of time. One newspaper labeled this an act of profanity and questioned whether the police would have dared to enter a mosque in order to arrest someone. Religious and political leaders alike criticized the arrest. Over coffee, Dias told us security forces were in the Cathedral but could not arrest him there because he was protected by other Church-goers. In fact, he said, they had to "chase" his car for some distance upon his leaving the Cathedral in order to intercept and arrest him. He was questioned for ten hours after his arrest but was released, he says, after some Catholic members of the Wade government brought in the priest who was saying Mass at the Cathedral when Dias was there. On April 20, he was charged with "threatening state security" and "disturbing public order" as a result of the statement he made on April 7 in connection with Dansokho's case. Dias was imprisoned the same day he was formally charged.

15. (U) Claiming to be in fear of his life, he immediately went on a hunger strike, refusing to eat any food brought to him in prison. He dropped his hunger strike within a few days, after his family was permitted to bring him food. On May 10, he was set free under provisional freedom but had to be forced out of the prison. He initially refused to go, wanting nothing less than complete dismissal of the charges, but finally was persuaded to leave. Upon release, he joked to reporters that "soon, President Wade's political prisoners could make a football team." The charges against Dias remain pending.

16. (C) Dias told us the GOS was set to go after him as soon

DAKAR 00001205 002 OF 002

as he joined the CPA. He believes the GOS wanted to immobilize him because he brought to the opposition a willingness to confront the GOS. He also said the charges the GOS levied against him were "empty" but were used because the GOS did not want to inflame religious sentiment. According to Dias, Wade only ordered him released on May 10, because Wade was shortly to receive an international prize in Paris and wanted to avoid controversy. Dias plans to push to have all charges against him permanently dropped.

#### SECK ALLY PAPE DIOUF ARRESTED FOR DESTROYING A WELL

16. (U) On May 7, Pape Diouf, Mayor of Bambey, was arrested by gendarmes from Diourbel, for having ordered the destruction of a well being built by the Minister of Urbanism and a local adversary, Assane Diagne. Diouf was charged with destruction of public property. Diouf claimed the Minister did not have authority to proceed with the project, but the two men are long-time political rivals. Diouf was also a friend to ex-Prime Minister Idrissa Seck. Omar Sarr, Seck's spokesman, described the unfolding of events as an effort by the GOS to cover up a blunder by putting all responsibility for the arrest on Diagne. At his trial on May 12, he and three co-defendants were given a suspended sentence of two years in prison, plus fined 500,000 CFAF (USD 1,000) and told to pay two million CFAF (USD 4,000) in damages.

#### COMMENT

17. (U) The facts of these three cases are different. Charges against Dansokho stem from a press conference that had the potential to embarrass the Government. Nevertheless, given that the charges against Sene were dropped, Dansokho would have likely faced the same outcome -- had it not been for the human shield gathered at his house. The fact that the DIC was forced to back down may have been an even greater embarrassment and ensured that the case would not end there. The case against Dias also flowed from the PIT press conference, but it raised religious questions that have not surfaced in Senegal for many years. Dias has played up this

dimension of his arrest, referring to himself as a "political, Catholic prisoner." Diouf is the odd man out, arrested presumably for going too far in a rivalry that has lasted for years. Nevertheless, this series of arrests of high profile politicians has led to many in Senegal wondering if this is the wave of the future. END COMMENT.

18. (U) Visit Dakar,s classified website at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar/>.  
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